

**STATEMENT OF
THE HONORABLE JERRY F. COSTELLO
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION
HEARING ON
A REVIEW OF THE FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION'S
OPERATIONAL AND SAFETY PROGRAMS
MARCH 22, 2007**

- I want to welcome everyone to the third Subcommittee hearing on the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reauthorization. This hearing represents an opportunity for panelists to discuss issues associated with FAA's operational and safety programs that they believe this Committee should consider in the context of the reauthorization.
- The first panel will include comments from the FAA's workforce, including the controllers, as represented by the National Air Traffic Controllers Association; air traffic technicians and aviation inspectors, as represented by the Professional Airways Systems Specialists, and other FAA professionals represented by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.
- As I have stated previously, I am very concerned about future staffing levels for the FAA's controller and safety inspector workforces. In particular, over the next 10 years, approximately 70 percent of FAA's nearly 15,000 air traffic controllers will be eligible to retire. FAA estimates that it could lose more than 10,300 air traffic controllers by 2015 and it will need to hire approximately 11,800 controllers over the next 10 years to have enough recruits in the pipeline to meet the positions lost.
- I am also concerned that FAA's unilateral imposition of pay and work rules on the controller workforce has accelerated retirements. According to NATCA, veteran controllers are currently retiring at a rate of more than three per day since the end of fiscal year 2006.
- It is clear to me that the contract negotiation process as currently designed does not promote good faith negotiations and gives an unfair advantage to the FAA. I am committed to fixing this grossly unfair process during the FAA Reauthorization bill.

- In addition, it is not just NATCA that is affected by the FAA's interpretation of its authority to impose pay and work rules: it extends to the FAA's entire workforce. I look forward to hearing from PASS and AFSCME on the status of their respective contract negotiations with the FAA.
- I am also concerned about potential attrition in FAA's safety inspector workforce. It is my understanding that over one-third of FAA's safety inspectors will be eligible to retire by 2010. Last year, the National Research Council reported that FAA lacks staffing standards for inspectors and recommended that the FAA undertake a holistic approach to determine its staffing needs.
- It is imperative that we make the investments in FAA's workforce now so that they can meet the new challenges for maintaining the highest level of safety in this ever changing aviation environment.
- The air carrier workforce is also well-represented here by the Air Line Pilot's Association, the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA and the International Association of Machinists. With the airlines largely back on track after the events of September 11th, it is time once again to turn our attention to workplace and safety issues. To that end, I look forward to hearing about issues of concern to pilots, flight attendants and mechanics.
- On our third panel today, we will hear from a diverse group, including a return visit from Gerald Dillingham, of the Government Accountability Office, to discuss issues related to safety, accommodating new users in the airspace system, airport congestion and air traffic staffing and training.
- With that, I want to again welcome the witnesses today and I look forward to the testimony.